

# BRIDGE Community of Practice - SIYAKHA STUDY: LESSONS LEARNED



## Background

- Little is known about the role of YEPs in supporting excluded young people's transition into employment.
- Siyakha Youth Assets for Employment Project is a longitudinal evaluation study that seeks to fill this knowledge gap.
- We asked:

***Are youth employability programmes effective in supporting young people to access post-secondary education and training and/or employment?***

- Focused on 8 YEPs in the private, public and third sectors.
- Tracked 2000 youth as they enter a YEP (wave 1); exit (wave 2); a year after exit (wave 3); and wave 4 (two years after exit).
- This presentation focuses on our *preliminary* analysis of the third wave.
- We also discuss challenges relating to doing this kind of research.



## Quantitative findings

- Employment findings at w3
  - **33% employed**, compared with QLFS comparison group of 38%
  - **NEET: 55%** vs 46%
  - **Discouragement: 11%** vs 8%
  - **Cycling through YEPs and learnerships:** 17% are doing a similar programme at w3 to the one they enrolled in at w1
    - Accessibility
    - Cost
    - Stipends ('employment')
    - Employment services
    - Friendship networks



## Quantitative findings

- Employment (continued):
  - **Self-esteem**, living in a **metro**, **per capita household income** are significantly associated with higher employment probability
  - After controlling for these factors, influential programme features are:
    - Those with a substantial focus on **practical, technical skills** (eg welding; carpentry)
    - Those that **match** youth to jobs
    - **Organisational disarray** reduces employment probability
- Education outcomes: **12% have enrolled in a certificate/diploma/degree** programme
- Work costs from wave 1-3:
  - **Transport**: Mean of around **R500** at each wave
  - **Other**: consistent mean of around **R300**
  - Mean **total** work-seeking costs of around **R800**



## Qualitative findings

- Approach
  - 46 in-depth interviews conducted after w3
  - 6 per organization (2 employed; 2 unemployed; 2 in PSET with equal gender and urban/rural split)
  - Realist Impact Evaluation; flexible; asks what works, for whom and in what context?
- Aim: ***to assess from the perspective of programme beneficiaries if the youth employability programmes (YEPs) had an impact i.e. could the achievement of longer term outcomes (employment, PSET) at wave 3 be attributed to the YEP (or not)?***



## Qualitative findings

- Young people in Siyakha miss PSET opportunities because:
  - Career guidance lacking, ad hoc or ineffective at school
  - High cost of fees and related costs:
    - some funding is not comprehensive
    - being unable to pay fees is main reason for dropping out; other costs related to studying
- Programmes have short comings:
  - **limited prospects of upward progression** due to lack of articulation between programme qualification offerings
  - **expectations created that are not met**, e.g. promise of job or qualification certificate
  - **YEP design challenges**, e.g. with work placement challenges; host companies not meeting obligations (cutting stipends, running out of funding midway through programme)
- Young people not adequately supported to access and keep opportunities
  - lack of access to information about what's available
  - high cost of transport for attending training



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## Challenges

- Tracking young people over time is difficult.
  - Life-phase of participants
  - Research fatigue (how does this benefit *me*?)
  - Cycling sim cards
- Lessons from the research process:
  - Calling from private numbers
  - Outsourcing of fieldwork
  - Research instrument too long, boring – focus on *essential* outcomes of interest.
  - The medium: make it interactive
- Organisational issues:
  - High staff turnover especially at larger organisations
  - Programmes, qualifications change constantly
  - Research (and/or youth) as not important



## Recommendations

- Career guidance and information.
- Job-seeking stipends.
- Transport subsidies for job-seekers.
- Prioritise roll-out of free public WiFi.
- Fix NSFAS and other FET funding schemes.
- Avoid looking at this work as charity.
- Making promises/creating expectations that are not met has consequences: be realistic.
- Sustained activism around exploitation in these sectors: mobile; transportation; food; wages.
- More focus on realistic research design.
- Limit the number of YEPs; scale up those that work. More coordination.
- We need more evaluative evidence – but as shown this is very difficult.
- What would you like to see in research like this?

